Introduction to Tamil Poetry

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Tamil Literature may be said to fall mainly into 6 periods :—

1. Sangam Literature (3rd Sangam Literature)—200 B.C. to 200 A.D.
2. Post-Sangam Literature—200 A.D. to 600 A.D.
3. Early Mediaeval Literature—600 A.D. to 1200 A.D.
4. Later Mediaeval Literature—1200 A.D. to 1800 A.D.
5. Pre-modern Literature—1800 A.D. to 1900 A.D.
6. Modern Literature—1900 A.D. to the present day.

In the first period (200 B.C. to 200 A.D.) poets were true to Nature and their poems abounded in descriptions of natural objects and things, perceived with a keen eye. Some of the ancient descriptions about birds and animals, trees and creepers found in the works of this period accord greatly with what we know of them today after the advent of biological sciences. This speaks for the keen powers of observation and attention to details of the poets of this age. Though prose also should have been composed in this period, such prose compositions have not, however, been handed down to posterity. That there were prose compositions in that period could be inferred from a rule contained in Tholka:ppiam classifying the types of prose compositions into four.

The poetical compositions were all collected as several anthologies. The names of these anthologies are given below :—

1. Eṭṭutokai.
2. Pattupāṭṭu
3. Padineṇkīlkaṇakku

Eṭṭutokai is the name given to eight big collections. They are :—

1. Narriṇai
2. Kuruntokai
3. Aiṅkurunūru
4. Kalittokai
5. Akanānūru
6. Puranānūru
7. Padirrupattu
8. Paripāḍal

Opinion is not unanimous in assigning all the eighteen smaller works (going by the name of Padineṇkīlkaṇakku) to the same age as the preceding two collections. Works such as Nālaḍiyār are found on closer scrutiny to belong to a later age than the second century A.D. Thirukkuraḷ, however, is one of the works comprised in Padineṇkīlkaṇakku which can be placed in a century not later than the second century A.D.

Pattupāṭṭu or Ten Idylls is a collection of 10 long poems of agaval metre. The work consists of the following :—

1. Thirumurukārrupaḍai
2. Cirupāṇārrupaḍai
3. Perumpāṇrrpaḍai
4. Porunārarrupaḍai
5. Kūttar Ārrupaḍai or Malaipaḍukaḍām
6. Mullaipāṭṭu
7. Kurinjipāṭṭu
8. Maduraikānji
9. Paṭṭinapālai
10. Neḍunalvāḍai

These major poems fall mainly into two categories, namely, those that describe the prowess and valour and generosity of kings and chieftains of those times, and those that describe the domestic life of the people of the time. Of course, there are also poems among these which are praises of the Almighty. However, in the religious poetry like Thirumurukārrupaḍai and Paripāḍal, descriptions of the landscape give a peculiar colour and splendour to the whole work. Puranānūru and Padirrupattu give an account of the ways in which one king fought with another and the ways in which chieftains and warriors took part in the wars of the times and the ways in which messengers

and ambassadors were sent and the ways in which wealthy people made gifts to the learned and the needy. There are plenty of references to the impartial way in which the kings of the time ruled their respective parts of the country. The collections in the Eṭṭutokai series are mainly concerned with courtship, elopement, marriage with or without approval of the parents, wedded life, marital estrangements, reconciliation, happiness and joy. Each one of the poems in these collections looks like a short story in verse form. The terseness with which the incidents have been narrated and the hidden meanings and suggestiveness of words occurring in these poems deserve special notice.

Āṟṟupaḍai is a type of poem by which, generally speaking needy persons would be told how they could approach a generous and beneficent lord and how the speaker himself had enjoyed the hospitality of that lord. This type therefore lent itself freely to a narration of the achievements of the king concerned, chieftain or a wealthy person or God. These poems have a special interest for those that want to study the topography of the Tamil country. In every one of these poems the regions of the jungle, mountain, fields and the sea are vividly described, together with the occupations and avocations and pastimes of the different sections of the population inhabiting those regions. Mullaipāṭṭu contains special descriptions of the forest region and gives a masterly and vivid picture of a woman, separated from her lover, bearing the burden of separation with fortitude. Kuṟinjipāṭṭu contains a beautiful description of the region of the hills and is noted for the marvellous way in which it has described the flora of that region. This poem gives an inkling of the traditional way in which a lover makes love to his beloved and gains her. Maduraikānji bears witness to the happy way in which people were spending their life by day and by night in Madurai, the capital city of the Pāṇḍyas. Paṭṭinapālai also contains similar descriptions pertaining to

Kāvēri pugum paṭṭiṉam, the capital city of the Cholas. The hero in the poem describes the seat of the capital of the Cholas and says that even if he were to get that capital city he would not allow himself to be separated from his beloved wife. Neḍuṉalvāḍai describes the camp life of a king who, amidst his warriors and generals, walks about in the dead of night praising their valiant deeds of the day and encouraging their further efforts for the morrow.

Among the works comprised in Padineṇkīlkaṇakku, Thirukkuṟaḷ and Nālaḍiyār deserve special mention. These two works have been rendered into English by late Rev. G. U. Pope. There are several other translations of Thirukkural iṇ Eṇglish. Rev. H. A. Popley has brought out the essence of the teachings of Thiruvaḷḷuvar, the author of Thirukkural in a little book. This is a work of great importance as it reflects the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of the Tamil people. This work, though referring to the prevalent thought of other sects living at that time, contains the quintessence of Tamilian thought on conduct in life. Dr. Albert Schweitzer stated that Thirukkuṟaḷ represents a marked degree of progress in the development of Indian or Asiatic thought and that the self-affirmation insisted upon in Thirukkuṟaḷ is contrary to self-negation contemplated in some of the Upanishads. He praised Thiruvaḷḷuvar for putting ethics of action higher than the ethics of inner perfection. The fact that Thiruvaḷḷuvar stressed the importance of being kind to other people and other creatures of the creation, that Thiruvaḷḷuvar enjoined on us that we should bear in mind how other people would react to every one of our actions and that we should learn how to live and how to let others live are enough to vouchsafe an honoured place for him among the great sages of the time.

Nālaḍiyār contains 400 verses in venba metre referring to the general conduct in life for an ascetic and a householder. These verses are said to have been composed by

several Jain saints and there is much influence of Thirukkuṟaḷ noticed in these quadruplets.

The secoṇd period—200 A.D. to 600 A.D. is probably a dark period in which either many compositions were not made, or if made, were not preserved. The political state of affairs of the country (the country came under the power of a foreign clan—the Pallavas) and the internecine warfare should be responsible for the paucity of output. At the same time, mention must necessarily be made of the five great Tamil epics, many of which appear to have been composed in this period. The place of honour goes to Cilappadikāram (or the Epic of the anklets) written by Iḷangō Aṭigal. Maṇimēkalai (or the epic of the waistlet), Cīvaka Chintāmaṇi, Vaḷaiyāpathi and Kuṇḍalakēsi are the other four great epics, some of which however were composed still later.

The period 600 to 1200 A.D. may be put down as the period of religious revival, for it is in this age that hosts of compositions on religious themes were composed by the Saiva Saints and Vaishnava Saints. These were preceded by Saint Tirumūlar who was the doyen of the Agamic faith and Siddhars like Korakkar and Sivavākkiār who represent the dissenters of the Vedic faith. It is in this period that the four great Saiva Samayāchāryar (Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manickavachakar) lived and composed their devotional poems which are noteworthy not only from a philosophical point of view but also from the literary point of view. It is in this period that the twelve great Vaishnava Aḷwārs lived and gave of their best in regard to the hymns to Vishnu. These poems also are worthy of study from both philosophical and literary points of view. A war poem called "Kalingattu Paraṇi" was also composed by Jayaṅkoṇḍar who lived in the time Kulōttuṅga I (11th to 12th century A.D.) and this poem is significant from historical and lyrical points of view. It contains the genealogy of many of the Chola kings, alludes

to their wars and conquests and finally pays a tribute to Karuṇākara Toṇḍaimān, who as the Commandar-in-Chief of Kulōttuṅga's army, defeated the Telugus at the battle of Kaliṅgam. The poem is exquisite in its descriptions of the march, the battle, the victory of the Tamils and the retreat of the defeated Telugus. One can see for oneself how the artist Jayaṅkoṇḍār has used his tools of similies, metaphors, hyperboles, personification etc., in this masterpiece. It is in this period again that Sēkkilār and Kambar, the authors of Periapurāṇam and Kamba Rāmāyaṇam respectively lived. Periapurāṇam mentioning the deeds of 63 Saiva Saints is a Tamil epic which can stand comparison with any other classical poem or epic of other countries. It is not the stories contained in this work that are so remarkable as the way in which they have been told. Again, it is not the matter contained in Kamba Ramayanam that has the foremost appeal but the manner in which the story has been told. Kambaṉ has not translated Ramayanam from the original, but the story of Rama contained in his Ramayanam is a new creation. Kamban was a master-mind who understood the psychology of the characters he was depicting. Oṭṭakūthar, Kālamēkam and other poets of this age have given valuable poems which are worth a study even today.

In the next period (1300 to 1700) appeared Villiputhūr Āḷwār and Aruṇagirināthar, two great exponents of the Vaishnavite and Saivite cults respectively. Their poems have a great appeal to the ear and consequently to the mind and to the heart. They were preceded by a host of eminent writers who expounded the principles of Saivite religion and Vaishnavite religion. It is in this period that Sivagnāṉa Bōtham by Meikaṇḍa Tēvar and Sivagnāna Siddhiār by Umāpathi Sivam, which represent the quintessence of Dravidian religious thought, were given.

Robert de Nobili arrived in Goa round about 1610 A.D. and assumed the name of Tattuva Bōdha Swami and con-

tributed greatly to Tamil Literature by his prose writings. Umaru Pulavar, a convert to Islam, composed in this century "Chīrāpurāṇam" an epic depicting the life and adventures of Mahomed the Prophet.

(Thāyumāṉavar composed several psalms in the 18th century A.D. which have received admiration and approbation because of the broadened and cosmopolitan outlook which he had taken. He has shown in his poems how there could be a happy combination and blending of Siddhanta and Vedanta.

Constantius Beschi alias Vīramā Muṉivar arrived at Goa in 1708 A.D. and threw his lot in the midst of the Tamils and composed several catechisms and prose treatises, including the story of Guru Noodle, the simple. He composed also an epic called Tēmpāvaṇi in which the life of St. Joseph has been marvellously told. The Lexicon, entitled "Chatura Akarāthi" which he compiled also marks a milestone in the history of lexicons in Tamil.

Āṟumuga Nāvalar of Jaffna and Rāmalinga Aḍigal of the South Arcot District contributed greatly to the thought of the time and influenced the public in a large measure in the 19th century. Āṟumuga Nāvalar was a prose writer par excellence and Rāmalinga Swāmigal was an inspired writer of devotional poetry of the period. The latter was noted for the simple and unostentatious way in which he approached the general public and his poems were not only for the learned classes but also for the masses. He propounded the view that God comes to the rescue not only of the learned and the cognates but also of the unlearned, down-trodden and uninitiated. Maha Vidwan Mīnakshisundaram Piḷḷai was a prolific writer of the 19th century, and judged by the mere quantity of poetry he has no compeers. He was responsible for giving Sthalapuranam for places which did not enjoy such privileges before.

In the modern period, the foremost star that glitters in the firmament is Subramaṇia Bhārathi, the National Poet

who sang and worked for the political independence of our country. He threw in his lot with the political sufferers of his time and spent 10 years of his precious life (he did not live longer than 40 years of age) in banishment at Pondicherry. It is there that he composed the bulk of his poems which led the people of Tamil Nad to glory and freedom. He wanted to unfetter the Tamil Muse from the shackles of rigid grammar from which she was suffering and consequently wrote poems in a simple and readable Tamil, without caring very much for the cold and rigid rules of prosody and rhetoric. Before his advent, people were prone to judge that poetry which was obscure and unintelligible as the best. Bhārathi was the first to give the death-knell to this kind of attitude and there are today several young and old poets who have followed him in the wake and whose contributions to literature are tending to be great and are promising. Kavimaṇi Dēsikavināyakam Piḷḷai wrote exquisite poetry in a simple way and his poems have a special appeal to children. Nāmakkal Kavignar, Rāmalingam Pillai, who had the honour of being made the Poet Laureate of the Madras State, also contributed greatly by his poems to the onmarch towards freedom. Bhārathidāsan, is a disciple of late Subramanya Bharathi, as is evident by his very name. Sometimes, he out-Herods Herod by his compositions. His poems have a special appeal to those that are anxious about social reforms in our country. He writes about the common man, the tiller of the soil, the hewer of wood and the drawer of water rather than about the wealthy or the powerful. Yogi Suddhānanta Bhāratiar is also widely known as a writer of both poetry and prose. Many of his poems are capable of being set to music. Vānidāsan and Mudi Arasan are two other budding poets of this time.

Now, I shall give some extracts from poetry representative of the various periods.

The noble ideals for which one lived are mentioned by one of the poets of the third Sangam period (Pēreyiṉ

Muṟuvalār) whose poem is one of the 400 poems found in the collection entitled "Puṟanānūṟu". Speaking of a Pandya by name Nambi Neḍuñcelian who had just died he says, (Pūṛam, Verse 239)

> "He was wedded to a fine wife. He wore the choicest of flowers. He anointed himself with all pleasant odours. But he utterly destroyed all his enemies. He praised his friends. Because a man was mighty, he never played second fiddle to him. Because a man was meek, he never over-imposed himself on him. Nevèr did he beg of anybody. But never did he decline to give to those in want. Quite renowned was he at the king's court. He faced bravely the armies that came against him and routed the enemies that were retreating. Hè was skilled in all the four kinds of warfare (the infantry, the elephantry, the charioteers and the horses.) He broke several honey pots for his friends. He sumptuously fed his songsters. Never did he speak a dubious word. Thus did he live, doing all that should be done. So let him be buried or let him be burnt. It does not matter, because he has established his reputation already in this world."

THIRUVALLUVAR has the message that one can either be a householder or an ascetic and yet prosper well and attain bliss. Sometimes, stray verses from Thirukkuṟal are cited to show that Thiruvaḷḷuvar placed the life of an ascetic over and above the life and doings of a man pursuing domestic life. Yet one can cite authority for the other view also as follows :—

For instance, in Kural 48 he says that the householder who, not swerving from virtue, helps the ascetic in his way of life, endures more than those who endure penance. In Kuṟaḷ 38 he says that he who suffers no day to pass unimproved but (continually) does some good will have by such conduct a great stone by which he can stop the approach of further births.

He has laid stress on the attitude of the heart rather than on the externals of religion. In Kuṟaḷ 34 he says whatever is done with a spotless mind is virtue ; all else is vain show. In another place (in Kuṟaḷ 280) he says that there is no use of a shaven crown or of tangled hair, if one abstains from such deeds as the wise have condemned.

The message of Thiruvaḷḷuvar is not pessimistic but optimistic. He has asked us to brave dangers, and to stand four square to all the winds that blow. More than this, he has asked us to be cheerful under adverse circumstances. (see for instance Kuṟaḷ 621—If troubles come, simply laugh ; there is nothing like laughter which can overcome sorrow). In another place, he pities people who cannot be cheerful at all. In Kuṟaḷ 99 he says, " To those who cannot rejoice, the wide world is buried in darkness even in broad daylight ". One of the ways in which one can be cheerful is to avoid wrath. He asks in Kuṟaḷ 294, " Is there a greater enemy than anger, which kills both laughter and joy ? " Sometimes, Thiruvaḷḷuvar is looked upon as having underlined the inexorable nature of fate. Though in a chapter (Chap. 38) he has stressed the importance of fate and though in the concluding couplet of that chapter he has asked " What is stronger than fate ? If we think of an expedient to avert it, it will appear through that expedient itself ", in other places he has held up the free will of man (as in Chap. 62 on manly effort), where in the concluding couplet he says, " they who strive hard without fatigue or desperation or delay will vanquish fate and throw it out. " In four chapters, especially, (Chapters 60 to 63), entitled " On Energy, Against Idleness, On Manly Effort, On Perseverence in spite of difficulties " he has laid the greatest emphasis possible on the free will of man and has removed the misconception that man is God's sport and that all his doings have been pre-ordained or pre-determined. Thiruvaḷḷuvar has stressed the importance of good conduct in life. His Chapter on propriety of conduct (Chap. 14) is well worth a complete study.

Kalittokai contains fine lyrical poems on love. At the same time, they present to us high ideals in life and satisfy the condition that true poetry must have high seriousness. In poem No. 10, the maid of a lady-in-love, while describing the desert region through which the lover has to pass, states that the desert is full of dry, leafless, tall trees. In this connection, the similies used by her are worthy of consideration. Even as a poor man, though young, cannot enjoy happiness and consequently becomes despondent, the branches of the trees have withered. Just as the wealth of a narrow minded miser is useless to others, the shade of the tree is absolutely useless to those that might resort to the tree for any shelter. Even as a man who has been rude to others has consequently suffered in reputation, the roots of the tree are affected by the rudeness of the blazing sun. Just as the shelter given by the ruler of a kingdom who persecutes and tortures his subjects due to greed of money is useless, the shade given by the tall withered trees is absolutely useless.

In another verse, the trees which blossom forth finely and fully are compared to the wealth of a tireless persevering man (poem 35).

In yet another poem (No. 125) people who do surreptitious things apparently because of their notion that no one sees them at the time, are required to remember that after all they cannot escape the prickings of their conscience. This also occurs in the words addressed by a maid to the lover of her beloved friend.

This work abounds in romantic scenes. A lover finds his beloved lass on her way home after milking cows and accosts her. In this way a poem commences (No. 116). The lass asks him why he stands across her path, takes hold of her calf and prevents her from going. She appeals to him to leave her. He asks her not to be angry at the moment. She tells him that if her mother saw him thus worrying her she would pounce upon him just as a cow would pounce

upon a person who touches the new-born calf. And he tells her "I do not mind whether your mother comes or your father comes or others come. If only you will have mercy on me I will remain unaffected. She speaks further as follows :—

"You do not pay heed to my words but insist on saying that you want me and bandy word for word with me. Unabashed, you are coming to the place where I go with the milking bowl". In this way, the girl is supposed to have indicated the place for their secret meeting.

Another girl had been in love with a teen-aged boy. They had met before but have not been married yet. She describes her dream in one of the poems (No. 128). She met him and asked why he had given her up contrary to the promise held out by him before. And he touched her and said that he would never thereafter be separated from her. She asked him with tears how he had forgotten the pleasures of her bedside and he replied, "O, how is it that you have become caged and confined like the pea-hen?" So saying he fell at her feet. Taking the flower garland from her head, she beat him with it as though she were beating him with a stick, and he trembled and asked "What wrong have I done to deserve this? Are'nt you a fool? This dream she narrates to her maid and says that because she has dreamt thus, her beloved friend is sure to come back. In this hope, she says that she is alive.

In another poem (No. 110) which is in the nature of a dialogue between the lover and his beloved of the forest region the similies used are significant. The girl says, "I allowed you to touch me but you want to embrace me. And you think that the woman who gives her cup of buttermilk out of charity also will give butter for the mere asking? He replies "Just as the rope in the churning stick goes to and fro, my mind, despite my efforts, is in the process of going to you, returning to me and again going back to you. Just as the cow, even during day time does not

want to stir out of the stable out of love and concern for the new-born calf, my mind would never go away from here leaving you. You have taken away my life and spirit with you, just as butter has been removed from the milk after churning. How can I live without you ?" She replies, "What a pity ! You dare tell me things such as that without me you wouldn't live. Don't you see that my relatives are there ? Go, I will pass along this side tomorrow also for grazing of the calf". The idea is that she has given him hope of meeting on the morrow.

The author of *Cilappadikāram* was Iḷankō Aṭikaḷ, the younger brother of Cheṅkuṭṭuvan, the Chēra King. He had renounced the world in order that the words uttered by an astrologer that he would become king might not come true. He thought that if he were to become king it would be to the detriment of his elder brother. He was of such a lovable and selfless disposition. He lived the life of an ascetic and years later composed this epic.

Iḷankō must have had before him a crude outline of the story of Kōvalaṉ's life. He has raised the story to the epic level by incorporating into the work supernatural events which, however, are made to appear probable. Such, for instance, are the words addressed to the Sun-God by Kaṇṇaki and his answer proclaiming from the heavens that her husband was not a thief.

Pāytirai vēlip paduporul nīariythi
Kāyakatirc celvanē kalvanō enkaṇavan ?

asked Kaṇṇaki, and straight came the reply

Kalvanō allan karunkayarkaṇ mātarāy
Olleri unnum ivvūr.

A poet thinks of acts and events greater and more historical than a historian can record.

Kaṇṇaki, the heroine represents the type of Tamil womanhood which assumes heroic stature when wronged.

The very sight of her in the court of the king, forlorn, dismayed and furious was enough to strike a note of terror into the hearts of the king and his men. That scene truly evokes pity and fear. Her innocent husband had been murdered without proper enquiry. She knew that her husband had not stolen the anklets of the queen ; she knew that by mistaking her own anklets for the queen's he had been killed. She could not rest until she proved that her husband was not guilty. Her strength was the strength of hundred as she was pure. Hence when she appeared before the king she spoke in a reproachful language :

Tērā mannā ceppuvatudaiyēn ;
Narriram padarā korkai vāntē !

When the Pāṇḍyan king asked her who she was and what business brought her there, her reply was given in such a manner as to give us the impression that she knew the procedure of the court. She began by describing the place of her origin, mentioned the names of her husband and his father and gave out her own name. She said to him, ' My husband came to your city with a view to setting up a business, O ! valiant king ! He came here to sell the ornament worn by me at the ankle but alas ! he has been killed ". These words are replete with significance. They imply that she and her husband had passed through several forests where wild beasts roam and that they who had emerged safe through the thick woods and deserts had suffered injury in a city inhabited by human beings and ruled over by the Pandyan king. They imply further that a king who was responsible for killing a guiltless person cannot be deemed valiant and that after all it was for the ornament of her foot (and not the head) that Kōvalaṉ her husband had been the victim.

The moment she proved with the aid of her matching anklet that her husband was not the thief the Pandya king repented and fell down dead. The language in which this is couched is remarkable for its poetic beauty :—

Tālnta kudaiyan Talarnta cenkōlan
Poncey kollan tancor kētta
Yānō arasan yānē kalvan
Manpatai kākkum Tenpulam kāval
Enmutal pilaittatu keduka en āyulena
Mannavan mayanki vīlntananē.

As soon as the king saw the diamond spurting from the broken anklet, he became conscious of his mistake and regarded him as one who was no longer fit to rule the land, as one who has failed to give succour to the helpless, as one whose sceptre has weakened. He exclaimed "Am I a king? No, I am the thief. The pride with which we, the Pandyas, have been guarding all the creatures against evil is gone, gone with me! Let me die!" This is but my imperfect rendering in English of a portion of the Tamil original.

MĀNICKAVĀCHAKAR, in one of his devotional lyrics speaks to his mind accosting it as a mind comparable to a corpse. He says further, "O! Guideless Mind! You do not dance, nor do you sing of the Lord of cosmic Dance. You have no love for Him. Should you not sing with great fervour? Are you not worried with the burden of your sins? You don't bow! You don't cherish the Feet of the Lord! Nor do you offer flowers at the Feet of the Lord! You never seek Him! You don't roam about the streets in search of Him. I wonder what to do!" (poem 35).

In another verse, he compares himself to Yama, the Destroyer who after coming into conflict with the Lord actually surrendered himself and gained His Feet (while capturing the life of Markandeya). That is to say, Manickavachakar alluded to the time when he had not completely done devotional and pious deeds and yet was hoping to receive the grace of God by occasionally offending Him. He appeals to God in another verse (No. 54) to shower His grace on him in the following manner:—

"All-knowing Lord! Nectar! Do you take me, this slave, into you fold because I am learned? When you

showered your bliss on me, did you not see that I was ignorant? O! God! whether I am a learned man or not, give me your grace." In another verse (No. 98) of Thiruchathakam, he points out the totally undeserving nature of man to receive heavenly bliss and the sweet, condescending attitude of the Almighty who was anxious to bestow it on man. He says, "I have no enduring love of you, O! Sweet Lord! You have made me, however, a disciple of yours by the skill with which you can make fine fruits of hard stones. There is no bound to your gracefulness. Whatever I might do or whatever I might take, O! Lord, I beseech you to bless me and to show me your feet. In another place (verse No. 407) he implores the Lord to forgive his sins and to rescue him. He says thus :—" O! Lord, who has conquered the foes and subdued them and made even an ornament of them! O! Lord! who, out of grace, has taken the burden of bearing the Ganga on your head! When I do abhorrent things out of my nature to err, you will, out of your generosity, forgive me. By your grace, let there be no more birth for me. I am your slave. I will surrender myself."

In yet another place (verse No. 94) Māṇickavāchakar is hopeful that if he wept bitterly he would obtain God's grace. He speaks, "I am a phantom; my heart is nothing; my love is false. Yet, wicked as I am, if I pray and weep I can attain you. O! Sweet Lord, Sweet as honey, Sweet as Nectar and Sweet as sugar-crush. O! Almighty! Tell me how I can attain you and bless me!"

KULASEKARA ĀLWĀR in his devotional songs addressed to the Lord Vishnu (Perumāl Thirumozhi—5th decade) makes a fervent appeal for obtaining His grace pointing out his own helplessness if God does not come to his rescue. He says, "There is no succour but your own Feet, O! Lord of Vittuvakōḍu. If you do not destroy my distress where else can I find shelter? Even if the tender child's own mother casts it aside out of great wrath, the

child looks up to her for being restored to her favour. Likewise, even if you frown on me I will hold you dear ".

" Even if the surgeon uses his surgical tools, the patient looks up to him with love for the curing of the disease. Likewise, even if you try me with tribulations and troubles I will only look up to you for your kind grace ".

' O ! Lord of Vittuvakōḍu, where can I find refuge except at your sacred Feet ? After straying in all directions over the ocean just as a bird comes back to the mast of the ship for perching, wherever I might wander I shall be coming back to you, beseeching your kind grace. "

That KAMBAR has understood the psychology of the characters he was portraying can be borne out by one of the padalams in Ayōdhya Kāndam (Kaikēyi Cūlvin̲ai paḍalam). Here according to the story, Kaikēyi reminding Dasarathan̲ of his two old boons persuades him to send away to the forest his dear son, Rama by one of those boons and gets the kingdom for her own son, Bharathan by the other. The art with which this incident is narrated is worthy of admiration. Kaikēyi is represented as having been determined in her mind about the two boons she was pressing. Though Dasarathan̲ voluntarily granted those boons at an earlier time when she had assisted him in one of his wars by charioteering for his sake and though now on being reminded he has willingly agreed to grant them, when he was told about the two actual boons required of him, he hesitated. He tried to persuade her not to be stubborn in regard to her pound of flesh. When persuasion failed he was about to be aggressive. He fretted and fumed and said that he would kill all women because they might be as cruel as his own wife. For sometime, he vascillated between keeping the word and deviating from it. He says, " How cruel is Duty ! Will not truth die ? " So saying he falls down. All this is because of his inordinate love for his first and dear son, Rama. So, now he tries to escape from the promise. He falls at the feet of Kaikēyi and im-

plores her to withdraw her second request, namely that Rama should go to the forest. But Kaikēyi is firm and reminds him of his honour of keeping up his word. She reminds him of the line of kings (to which he belongs) who were all anxious to keep up their honour in their own days. Dasarathan had desired that Rama should become king. He had made that announcement in the open court. What is to come of that word ? He feels frustrated and thwarted. There ensues a conflict in his mind regarding the line of action he is to choose. He becomes angry and hates Kaikēyi who thwarts him. He tries to place the blame for the thwarting on persons who are not responsible for this situation at all. He has now to choose between moral and less moral modes of conduct. Ultimately, he prefers the remote goal to the nearer goal. After a period of conflict, indecision, vascillation and struggle within himself he decides to keep his word. The choice is due to his character and will power. He therefore wills to do that which he does not want to do. Thus it is that he ultimately agrees to sending away Rama to the forest. Already he has granted the other boon, namely, that Bharatha should rule the kingdom. It is marvellous to find that Kamban has applied these processes in the delineation of the character of Dasarathan.

SUBRAMANIA BHARATHI pleaded for the emancipation of women, who out of false notions which developed in mediaeval society were put down as chattels or slaves. In one of his poems on womanhood he says, " Let us dance saying let womanhood flourish; let us dance saying let womanhood conquer ". The terms Mother and Wife invoke in us a tenderness, happiness and joy.

" Let us dance peacefully saying let love live long ; let us clap our hands and bless real love ; we can be free from distress only because of womanhood ; Is not woman mother of mighty heroes ? The suckling child imbibes strength from Mother ; the wife's words bring honour to

man ; women's duties drive away destruction ; let us clasp our hands and merrily dance ".

" Let us raise our shoulders and dance saying ' obeisance to Mother ' ; let us praise the loving doves ; at the behest of a woman of the fine waist we will pull asunder hundreds of hills ".

" Let our cymbals ring with the note ' obeisance to Mother ' ; let our flutes play the note ' Bowing to Mother ' ; at the behest of the loving women of charming eyes we will soar above the winds and offer threat to the heavens. "

In another place (Bharathi Sixty-Six) he again puts in a strong plea for the upliftment of women. He asks, " If we want to subdue our own wives, should we enslave the entire other sex ? Should we not regard our Mother who begot us and brought us up as a real Goddess ? O ! unkind friends ? "

Bharathi's poems are noteworthy because of the spirit of courage which they instil into the people. In his famous poem entitled " No Fear ", he starts saying " No Fear, No Fear, there is absolutely No Fear. Even if the whole world marches against us, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear ; Even if the world slanders us treating us lightly, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear. Even if we are reduced to begging alms, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear. Even if all our dear friends are lost, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear ".

" Even when lovely ladies send their ogling glances, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear. Even when loving friends bring poison and feed no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear.

" Even when bloody spears are hurled against us, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear. Even when the heavens crash and fall on our heads, no fear, no fear, there is absolutely no fear "

I will now briefly allude to a folk song composed by Bhārathi Dāsan in order to show how dexterously he puts modern ideas into the mouths of his speakers. He sings, "Brother, there is no caste; there is no man who is high nor low; look at our Thirukkural which has come to remove our moss; brother, justice is the same to all, to all those who live in this broad world. Justice is the same to woman and to man."

"Dear brother, your discerning knowledge is but the green light signal for you; with that green light you must seek the proper path. Brother, there is no fear, if you are on the right path. Beware of hypocrisy! beware! beware!"

These are but a few representative specimens intended to introduce Tamil poetry to the readers.